

## ASSISTED ECOMMERCE—RETAINING CONSUMERS, DRIVING SALES

[vc\_row][vc\_column][vc\_column\_text]There are several ways of looking at the term ‘assisted e commerce’. The typical model involves an ecommerce site assisting the customer through an offline channel. For example, the customer can walk into the physical store, check out the product specimen, and place an order for the same online with the help of the storekeeper. This works particularly when the ecommerce site wishes to expand its reach among consumers who do not have access to the internet.

The other manner in which we see assisted ecommerce making its presence felt is helping online retailers increase sales through the medium of the internet itself. This is accomplished through several customer relationship [e commerce management](#) techniques, that are mainly conducted to increase sales and retain customers. A study has even proved that repeat customers prove to be more valuable to online retail sites as far as increased sales numbers are concerned.



According to this finding, if the shopper has returned to a particular online store for at least the third time they are more likely to spend five times the amount spent by a new customer. This should be reason enough to begin employing the following strategies as part of the assisted [global ecommerce solution](#).

### Email marketing

Yes, these work, but when done correctly at different points in the product purchase process.

- **Pre-purchase emailer:** The Major Purchase Shopper Study 2013, conducted annually

by GE Capital Retail Bank, USA, found that nearly 81 per cent customers spend a minimum of 79 days researching and gathering information about a particular product before buying it. This only means that sending an email once a week about the latest collections or promotions on the e-store will help make the customer aware and aid them in making their informed choice better.

- **Cart abandonment emailer:** A consolidated figure based on 34 different studies pertaining to online cart abandonment by users has shown that 68.81 per cent users abandon their shopping carts. While the reason for this may be many, sending out cart abandonment emailers no less than two hours after the cart has been kept aside is a profitable way of making sales and retaining customers. The key is to give the mail a personal touch (mention the user's name, the specific product abandoned, etc.) and to create a sense of urgency so as to close the deal as soon as possible. The following image serves as a good example.



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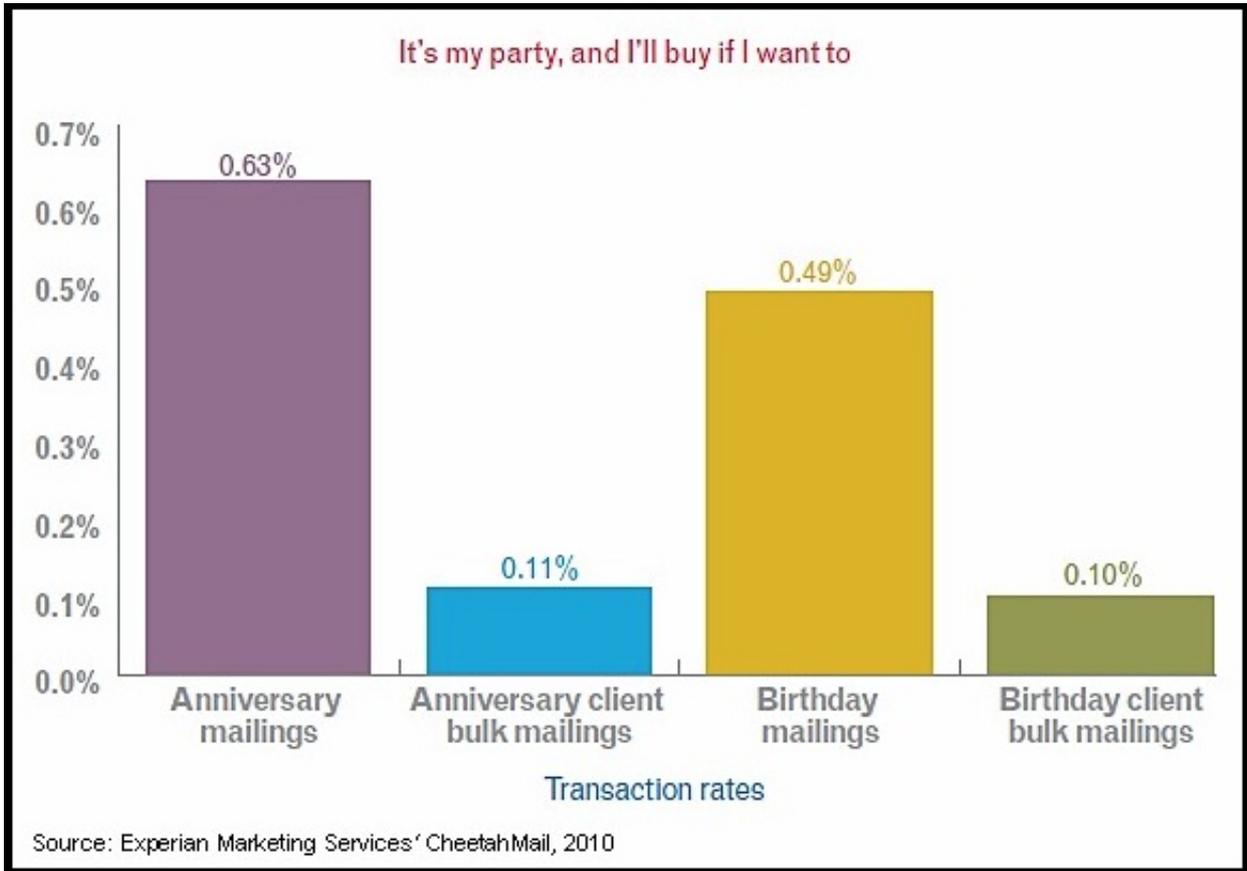
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- **Post-purchase emailer:** It is necessary to keep the conversation going with the customer if you want to increase the number of repeat customers your e-store has. Making use of segmented email marketing, mails can be sent to customers based on the product purchased and their demographic. It is all about pushing for the second sale and a month after the purchase has been made is a good time to send out these mailers. Repeat customers can also be engaged to join larger online campaigns run by the store via the post-purchase emails.
- **Milestone emailer:** And by this we mean personalised birthday or anniversary greeting

emailer. A study conducted found that personalised mails resulted in five times greater a transaction rate than the standard bulk mails.



- Targeted emailers:** As part of the assisted ecommerce retention of customers' process, it is imperative to maintain a relationship with the consumer throughout their lifecycle. And thus, targeted emailers are sent out after categorising the different consumers to engage them and push for increased sales. For example, privileged offer mails to loyal consumers, reengaging dormant consumers with a 'we miss you' email, etc.

### Live calls & online chats

Live calls and online chats were introduced to build on the need to interact among online consumers. Through live calls, queries can be answered while the transaction is taking place, saving up on time and quickening the decision-making process of the individual. Online chats are a highly convenient and effective way of providing support to the customer during the purchase of goods online. Not only does it help dissipate a buyer's concerns with regards to a given product, but also acts as an efficient sales channels, convincing the customer and sealing deals in a matter of a few minutes. And there are quite a few statistics to prove the same:

- A study conducted by an American independent technology and market research company found that nearly 44 per cent of consumers who shop [online market place](#) say that answering questions during the purchase process is an important feature that e

commerce websites should provide.

- Approximately 90 per cent of respondents in a the ATG Global Consumer Trends study stated that live chats are extremely helpful during online purchase and transaction.
- According to a survey on [emarketer.com](http://emarketer.com), 62 per cent consumers were likely to revisit those e commerce websites that provided this live chat feature, while 38 per cent said that they actually finalized their deals during the online chat with the customer executive.

The key though is to not make the live call/chat seem robotic. This feature is popular among consumers due to the personal touch that is provided to virtual shopping and a monotonous, rehearsed conversation is not going to help the company close deals.

### **SMS marketing**

Yes, you do not want your phone inbox to be filled with spam ie one too many promotional message. But SMS marketing is a highly influential tool in the assisted e commerce kit. SMS marketing has a high open rate, almost 90 per cent, and this figure easily beats that of email marketing. Also, a series of Nielsen Mobile studies have proven that 98 per cent of customers read an SMS within three minutes of receiving it. This means that you have a 3-minute window within which you need to compel the customer to visit your site. Make an offer the consumer can't refuse in the first line of the message itself and you will have increased your sales figures.

### **Whatsapp marketing**

Just a few years ago mentioning this term would cause many to raise an eyebrow. Today, with more than 700 million active users and a 70 per cent engagement rate that is higher than Facebook, marketers are continuously looking to see how this medium can be best utilised to drive sales. This becomes trickier due to the fact that WhatsApp is a personal messaging platform and consumers wouldn't want to marketing spam messages. What do you do then? You build a fun persona of the brand that the consumers can connect with and provide speedy customer service through it. The conversion rate of consumers on the Reliance Brands' whatsapp list was as high as 80 per cent. This included posting queries about products to be purchased and getting to know about product innovations through promotional images and videos.

**Referral marketing** : It is a tried and tested formula that numbers say works wonders for the brand. Matthew Stinchcomb, founder, Etsy, said 90% of their growth came from word-of-mouth alone. The New York Times is reported to have said that referrals generate nearly 65 per cent new business. A Nielsen survey back this claim by stating that 92 per cent of their study respondents claimed that they were four times more likely to buy a product if it was referred to them by a friend. As part of the assisted e commerce process, online stores must create a win-win situation for both parties—the current consumer and their referrals. For example, provide an offer to the consumer for referring their friends, who will in turn be rewarded too.



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Online retailers need strong players to manage their assisted [online b2b marketplace](#) and ND Commerce is one such company that has several years of experience in this field. Their skilled team of experts can manage these and several other assisted e commerce aspects such as [setup online store](#) of business exceedingly well in order to help drive sales home for the parent online store.[/vc\_column\_text][/vc\_column][/vc\_row]